

#2 2-3-16 Submitted by Jeremy Jones

This previous summer I wanted to get something for our family to use when experiencing the outdoors. We decided on a side-by-side. After a few trips with my wife and two boys, we decided it was a great family activity which we easily enjoyed. I thought that there were many open trails, seasonal roads, logging roads, along with the option to drive on the shoulder of roads.

On the second of July this past year my dad came down for a visit. He had never been on a side-by-side before and wanted to go for a ride. We noticed that logging had begun and wanted to check out what was being done. We decided to take a seasonal road that connects with a trail. While on the seasonal road, we came around a curve and met the DNR. I pulled off the road as far as I could and shut the vehicle off. They proceeded forward, rolled their window down, informed me to make sure that I had the buggy shut off, and do not move. The officer backed his vehicle up and turned the lights on.

During that time, being a CPL cardholder, I got my card and license out of my wallet for when they returned to the side-by-side. The first DNR officer approached the side-by-side. I stated to the officer, as I was handing him my licenses, that I have a CPL and I was carrying. The officer's voice and hand gestures changed as soon as I informed them. I noticed their hands move down toward their waists, which made me feel uncomfortable. The officer asked me what I was doing and why I was on State land. I informed the DNR officer that I thought it was a seasonal road and that we were allowed to be on the road. The officer very quickly informed me that I was not allowed on the road. The officer took my license and CPL back to his vehicle to run them.

After the officers came back to the side-by-side, with a ticket in hand, they very sternly informed me that I was not allowed to be on that seasonal road as it was not a posted trail. Then the officer continued to make it known that if he decided to push the situation he had the power to revoke my CPL and impound the side-by-side. The DNR officer did write me a lesser ticket for operating in a closed area. That ended up being a \$120 fine. I mentioned again that I thought I was allowed to be here but the officer made it clear that as the operator it was my responsibility to know what was open or closed. The officer also informed me to let my friends know that the DNR had aerial coverage that weekend and to stay off their side-by-sides in this area if they do not want tickets.

During the weekend I investigated trails around Gaylord and found that there are no trails for UTVs. Throughout the rest of the summer my family and I took our side-by-side to the U.P.

I do not understand why the Upper Peninsula was open to UTVs and encouraged these vehicles to be used but the Northern Lower Peninsula doesn't. I also do not understand why snowmobiles are welcomed to Gaylord in the winter but other vehicles are not wanted on the trails in the summer.

Opening the trails in the summer to UTVs would greatly benefit the Northern part of the Lower Peninsula. This would increase business due to those traveling to the area to ride their UTVs. Not to mention, by opening the trails we would be promoting enjoying the outdoors and spending time with family.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story and thoughts.

